





# MAXWELL DAVENPORT TAYLOR

1 October 1962 — 1 July 1964

**M**axwell Taylor was born on 26 August 1901 in the small Missouri town of Keytesville, near Kansas City. After attending Northeast High School and Kansas City Junior College, he entered the US Military Academy, graduating fourth in his class in 1922.

Commissioned as an Army engineer, Taylor transferred in 1926 to the field artillery and served one year with the 10th Field Artillery. Thereafter, most of his assignments before World War II made use of his fluency in foreign languages. He taught French and Spanish at West Point. Then in the 1930s he was attached to the US Embassy in Tokyo, Japan, and served as Assistant Military Attaché in Peking, China. In June 1940 Taylor was sent on a special hemispheric defense mission to Latin America. In December 1940 he returned to an artillery assignment as Commander of the 12th Field Artillery Battalion at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

When the United States entered World War II, Major Taylor was serving in the Office of the Secretary of the War Department General Staff. Promoted to colonel in June 1942, he was assigned as Chief of Staff to Brigadier General Matthew Ridgway at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. Taylor helped Ridgway transform the 82d Infantry Division into the Army's first airborne division.

Following promotion to brigadier general in December 1942, Taylor took command of the 82d Division Artillery, which saw combat in Sicily and Italy from July 1943 through early 1944. On 7 September 1943 he participated in a daring secret mission behind enemy lines to Rome just twenty-four hours before the scheduled invasion of Italy. His judgment that the risks of

**General Maxwell D. Taylor**  
United States Army



Lieutenant General Taylor in Korea, February 1953.

an airborne landing near Rome were too great resulted in cancellation of the planned air drop. In March 1944 Taylor assumed command of the 101st Airborne Division. He was promoted to major general in June. Taylor parachuted with the division into Normandy on D-Day and commanded it during the

airborne invasion of Holland and in the Ardennes and Central European campaigns.

In September 1945 Major General Taylor became the Superintendent of West Point. After four years at the Academy, he filled successive assignments as Chief of Staff of the European Command; the first US commander

in Berlin; and, on the Army Staff, Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and, after promotion to lieutenant general in August 1951, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Administration.

On 11 February 1953 Lieutenant General Taylor assumed command of the Eighth US Army. Under his command, the Eighth Army engaged in the Korean War's last round of bitter fighting. Taylor received his fourth star on 23 June 1953. After the 27 July 1953 armistice, he presided over several massive exchanges of prisoners, helped expand the Republic of Korea's army, and administered the US military assistance program for the Republic of Korea. In November 1954 he assumed command of all US ground forces in Korea, Japan, and Okinawa and, in April 1955, of the US Far East Command and the United Nations Command in Korea.

Appointed Chief of Staff of the Army on 30 June 1955, Taylor served in that position for four years. During his tenure he advocated less reliance on the doctrine of massive nuclear retaliation to a Soviet attack and more dependence on flexible response. Taylor's fight against cutbacks in Army strength put him at odds with his old commander, President Dwight Eisenhower. To make the best use of reduced forces, Taylor decided to substitute firepower for manpower. Under his supervision, the Army replaced the old triangular organization of the infantry division with three regiments with a "pentomic" organization of five small, self-contained battle groups able to disperse or concentrate rapidly on the atomic battlefield and capitalize on the US advantage in tactical nuclear weapons. While Taylor was Chief of Staff, the Army also enforced court-ordered school desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957 and, together with the US Marines, protected the government of Lebanon during 1958.

After retiring from active duty in July 1959, General Taylor criticized US strategic planning and joint organization in *The Uncertain Trumpet*, published in 1960. This book influenced President John F. Kennedy's decision to adopt the strategy of flexible response. Taylor then pursued a civilian career, first as chairman of the board of the Mexican Light and Power Company and later as president of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York.

In 1961, at President Kennedy's request, General Taylor returned to public service. In April the President asked him to lead a group to investigate the Bay of Pigs debacle, which had badly shaken the President's confidence in the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Kennedy then recalled Taylor to active duty as his Military Representative at the White House. It was in this capacity that General Taylor first became involved in the expanding US military effort in Southeast Asia. In late 1961, after visiting Saigon, Taylor recommended sending 5,000 to 8,000 US support troops to help South Vietnam resist the growing Viet Cong insurgency.

Impressed with Taylor's advice and ability, President Kennedy appointed him Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 1 October 1962. Just two weeks after Taylor became Chairman, the United States obtained the first definite evidence that the Soviet Union was secretly establishing missile sites and developing an offensive nuclear capability in Cuba. General Taylor was a member of the Executive Committee (EXCOMM) of the National Security Council, the small group of officials that the President summoned to advise him on a daily basis during the Cuban missile crisis. Speaking on behalf of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Taylor recommended air strikes against Cuba, naval quarantine of the island, and preparation for an invasion. President Kennedy on 22 October directed a naval quarantine of Cuba, alerted a force of some 250,000 men for a



Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy swears in General Taylor as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 October 1962. President John F. Kennedy looks on.

possible invasion, and called upon the Soviet Union to withdraw its missiles, but he reserved air strikes as a last resort. The Soviet Union removed the missiles in mid-November, and the crisis passed.

On arms control, General Taylor reversed his longstanding opposition to a nuclear test ban and convinced the Chiefs to do likewise. They had opposed such a treaty as an invitation for the Soviet Union to carry on test-

ing secretly in order to achieve nuclear supremacy. During August 1963, in what Taylor later described as his greatest "diplomatic" triumph, he persuaded his colleagues that a limited test ban was compatible with national security. Following endorsement by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Senate approved the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with the Soviet Union on 24 September 1963.



General Taylor in South Vietnam, 1963.

While General Taylor was Chairman, the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam increasingly occupied the attention of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. A coup in Saigon, resulting in the assassination of President Ngo Dinh Diem in early November 1963, unleashed further political instability in South Vietnam. The Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese patrons exploited the turmoil by intensifying attacks in the countryside and against US military advisers in South Vietnam. In March 1964 the new President, Lyndon B. Johnson, directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to draw up plans for retaliatory air strikes against North Vietnam. Following

trips to Saigon in the spring of 1964, General Taylor and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara urged continued support of the South Vietnamese counterinsurgency effort, short of US ground combat involvement. They did recommend planning for air strikes and possible commando raids against North Vietnam, a course that was not followed until after Taylor's retirement.

On 1 July 1964 President Johnson named Taylor the US Ambassador to South Vietnam, and General Taylor retired from military service for a second time. In Saigon, Ambassador Taylor witnessed both the introduction of US ground combat troops into South

Vietnam and the launching of a US air campaign against North Vietnam, actions that had been actively considered while he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

After resigning as ambassador in mid-1965, Taylor served on the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board and as a special adviser to President Johnson. He was president of the Institute for Defense Analyses

from 1966 to 1969. Throughout his retirement General Taylor wrote and lectured widely on defense and national security matters. His major works include *Responsibility and Response* (1967), *Swords and Plowshares* (1972), *Changing Dynamics of National Security* (1974), and *Precarious Security* (1976). General Taylor died at Walter Reed Army Medical Center on 19 April 1987.

# Maxwell Davenport Taylor

## General, USA

### Promotions

### Dates

	Temporary	Permanent
2LT . . . . .		13 Jun 22
1LT . . . . .		09 Mar 27
CPT. . . . .		21 Aug 35
MAJ . . . . .		09 Jul 40
LTC . . . . .	01 Jan 42 . . . . .	13 Jun 45
COL . . . . .	24 Jun 42	
BG . . . . .	11 Dec 42. . . . .	24 Jan 48
MG . . . . .	21 Jun 44. . . . .	08 Mar 52
LTG . . . . .	01 Aug 51	
GEN. . . . .	23 Jun 53	

### Assignments

### Dates

	From	To
Student, Engineer School, Fort Humphreys, VA, and Officer, 17th Engineers, Camp Meade, MD . . . . .	1922 . . . . .	1923
3d Engineers, Schofield Barracks, HI . . . . .	1923 . . . . .	1926
6th Engineers, Camp Lewis, WA; transferred to 10th Field Artillery . . . . .	1926 . . . . .	1927
Student of French language, Paris, France; then Instructor, US Military Academy, West Point, NY . . . . .	1927 . . . . .	1932
Student, Field Artillery School, Fort Sill, OK . . . . .	1932 . . . . .	1933
Student, Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, KS . . . . .	1933 . . . . .	1935
Student of Japanese language, US Embassy, Tokyo, Japan; Assistant Military Attaché, Peking, China (1937) . . . . .	1935 . . . . .	1939
Student, Army War College, Washington, DC . . . . .	1939 . . . . .	1940
Member, War Plans Division, on Hemisphere Defense Mission to Latin America . . . . .	1940 . . . . .	1940
Commander, 12th Artillery Battalion, Fort Sam Houston, TX . . . . .	1940 . . . . .	1941
Office of Secretary, General Staff, War Department, Washington, DC . . . . .	1941 . . . . .	1942
Chief of Staff, 82d Airborne Division, Camp Claiborne, LA; then Division Artillery Commander, 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC . . . . .	1942 . . . . .	1943



## Assignments

	Dates	
	From	To
Division Artillery Commander, 82d Airborne Division, Sicily and Italy . . . . .	1943 . . . . .	1944
Commanding General, 101st Airborne Division, Normandy, Western and Central Europe . . . . .	1944 . . . . .	1945
Superintendent, US Military Academy, West Point, NY . . . . .	1945 . . . . .	1949
Chief of Staff, European Command, Heidelberg, Germany . . . . .	1949 . . . . .	1949
US Commander, Berlin . . . . .	1949 . . . . .	1951
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3 and Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations and Administration, Department of the Army, Washington, DC . . . . .	1951 . . . . .	1953
Commanding General, Eighth Army, Korea, Army Forces, Far East . . . . .	1953 . . . . .	1954
Commanding General, US Army Forces, Far East and Eighth US Army, Far East Command . . . . .	1954 . . . . .	1955
Commander in Chief, Far East Command . . . . .	1955 . . . . .	1955
Chief of Staff, US Army, Washington, DC . . . . .	1955 . . . . .	1959
Retired from active service, 30 June 1959		
Recalled to active duty, 01 July 1961		
Military Representative of the President, Washington, DC . . . . .	1961 . . . . .	1962
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, DC. . . . .	1962 . . . . .	1964

## Principal US Military Decorations

Distinguished Service Cross  
 Army Distinguished Service Medal (with 3 oak leaf clusters)  
 Silver Star (with oak leaf cluster)  
 Legion of Merit  
 Bronze Star  
 Purple Heart